

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 4

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Won't Probe 'Post' and 'Journal'

News Council Ducks Responsibility

The National News Council, an organization that claims to be a watchdog of the news media, has refused to take up charges that the *Washington Post* and the *Wall Street Journal* were guilty of violating journalistic ethics because they failed to cite CIA defector Philip Agee as a source in stories attacking the State Department's White Paper on El Salvador.

Last July HUMAN EVENTS revealed that reporters for the *Post* and *Journal* used a massive critique of the White Paper by Agee in preparing those stories, and that both newspapers borrowed heavily from it. However, neither newspaper cited Agee as a source, even though Agee himself later took credit for both stories.

M. Stanton Evans, director of the National Journalism Center, wrote the National News Council on August 14 asking it to comment on the propriety of the *Post's* and *Journal's* omitting all mention of or credit to Agee. The Evans letter, based on material published and developed by HUMAN EVENTS, along with Agee's own statements about his role in the criticism of the White Paper, charged that Agee was "a principal though unacknowledged source" in the *Journal* and *Post* stories.

Abe Raskin, the associate director of the News Council, told HUMAN EVENTS that the council met on December 3 and decided to have the Evans letter dealt with in a study to be conducted on the general subject of the media's use of anonymous sources. Raskin couldn't say if the study would actually comment on whether the *Post's* and *Journal's* use of Agee as a confidential source was right or wrong.

Evans told HUMAN EVENTS that he was disappointed by the News Council action. He said the conduct of the *Post* and *Journal* was indefensible, and expressed the hope that the News Council would eventually face the issue.